

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO HB 5429

March 14, 2022

Dear Esteemed Chairs and Members of the Planning & Development Committee:

I serve on the Town of Wilton's Board of Selectmen but I am testifying on my own behalf and this bill has not been discussed at any of our meetings.

I have been a homeowner in the town of Wilton since 2008. Prior to that, we lived in the city of Norwalk where we bought our first home in 1994.

I have been following this committee's bills closely since early last year when I became aware of the lobbying group that calls itself DesegregateCT and their attempts to label towns like Wilton as exclusionary based on our local zoning regulations. At the same time, the state legislature started putting forth bills that attempted to assert itself into all 169 municipalities' planning and zoning commissions and pushing for as of right development with no consideration of each town's or city's individual needs. The only winner in all of the bills I've seen is developers. If this bill passes as written, developers will be able to build without any input from our duly elected local officials or be required to follow our town's regulations that the rest of us have to adhere to.

The language of this bill "shall allow, as of right, housing developments with a minimum overall average gross density of fifteen dwelling units per acre located within a half-mile radius of any passenger rail or commuter rail station or any bus rapid transit station."

Reading this language, it would allow "as of right" development until the designated transit zone reaches a minimum of 15 units per acre.

Mathematically, the bill would require towns to rezone to allow "as of right" development within a small area for approximately, at a minimum, 1,882 units in any half-mile radius of a train station. So, in Wilton, a total minimum of **3,764** units would be needed before our local zoning rules would apply within the TOD zones.

I would urge all of you on this committee to come to Wilton. We have two train

stations, one near our downtown and one in a historical district that still has many of its original homes which add significant historical value to our Town. According to Wikipedia- *The Cannondale Historic District, in north-central Wilton, retains its historic character and was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1992.* Will this designation protect it from predatory developers? I do not see anything in the bill that would do so.

This bill would allow for 3,764 units to be built with no public input, no concern for traffic, the environment, burden on our infrastructure or municipal services in a town that only has **6,116** housing units. This bill is misguided, to say the least for a town such as Wilton. Even worse, the new bill doesn't require ANY affordable housing on projects under 6 units, so you may expect existing actually affordable 'middle housing' to be replaced by luxury townhouses thus squeezing the housing disadvantaged even more. A top-down, one-size-fits-all approach to zoning does not work.

In Wilton, we have a P& Z commission whose members have extensive experience, knowledge of our state and local regulations and desire to see responsible, sensible developments be built in town. We have a Plan of Conservation and Development that addresses diversifying our housing stock. We have a newly created Housing Committee whose purpose is to evaluate, define, and monitor the need for diverse housing options and affordable housing in Wilton.

Wilton has shown that it is committed to growing and diversifying its housing stock. We do not need the state to overreach and mandate one-size-fits-all legislation and we should be allowed to retain our local control of planning and zoning.

Thank you for your service and your consideration.

Sincerely yours,
Kim Healy
Wilton, CT